

Crisis Education Project Profile

March 2005

Project: Mine Risk Education for Children (MREC)

Locations: Cambodia (Oddar Meanchay, Siem Reap, Battambang, Banteay Meanchay, Preah Vihear, Pursat, Pailin, and Kompong Thom)

Implementing Organization: World Education

Type of Programming: Community education program on landmine risk prevention implemented through local schools

Target group/beneficiaries: School-age children, out-of-school youth, educators, and the wider community

Stage: Transition (post-conflict)

Environmental Context of the Program

SOCIAL: Cambodia has recently emerged from three decades of civil conflict and the rule of the Khmer Rouge. Over the many years of war and civil conflict, the country's infrastructure was decimated, in particular its education system. Official illiteracy rates among adults are 43% for women and 22% of men, but in reality illiteracy is far higher, particularly in rural areas. The education system is now being redeveloped by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MoEYS) with much external support. Cambodia has one of the greatest landmine problems in the world. Recent estimates carried out by the Cambodian Mine Action Center suggest that the Cambodian soil is littered with 4 - 6 million landmines found in 1,800 confirmed and 800 suspected minefields, covering an area of more than 2,700 square kilometers. De-mining efforts are underway by the Cambodian government and international nongovernmental organizations, but the level of contamination is so high that at the present rate of de-mining it will take another 150 years to clear Cambodia's soil of landmines. Clearance efforts also focus on unexploded ordnance -bombs, bombies, grenades, and other explosive weapons-silent and unpredictable killers remaining from years of military conflict in the region. Together, landmines and UXO constitute a great threat to public health in many areas of Cambodia.

CULTURAL/RELIGION: About ninety six percent of the population is ethnic Khmer. Other ethnic groups in Cambodia include Vietnamese, Chinese, Cham Muslims and Khmer Loeu. Buddhism is the predominate religion.

ECONOMIC: The population is dependent on agricultural activities and forest products for their livelihoods. Seventy-five percent of the population works in the agricultural sector. Employment options for unskilled persons are extremely scarce. The per capita GPD is estimated at US\$286 with an estimated 36% of the overall population and 40% of the rural population living in poverty.

Political Relationships: The northwest of Cambodia experienced great amount of fighting and conflict during the last three decades. It was mostly in the northwest, along the border with Thailand, that Khmer Rouge guerillas fought to retain control from the government forces until the late 1990s. Districts that were previously closed off to contact with the rest of Cambodia have now been reopened.

Program Description

TARGET GROUP: Primary school and out-of-school children in the northwestern provinces, which are the provinces most heavily effected by land mines - recording more than 80% of all casualties in Cambodia. Children in schools were targeted through in school activities and their out of school peers were reached through peer education and community based awareness activities. Teachers, local government officials, and community members constituted a secondary target group.

MATERIAL/PHYSICAL RESOURCES: School based activities were carried out in the classroom using posters, story books, silk screens, videos, maps, alphabet cards, note book, and pens, all of which were provided by the project. Materials for out of school students included silk screens, posters, story books, stickers, note books, and video. T-shirts were provided to village leaders, school teachers and out of school student leaders. Community based activities took place in public spaces and used videos, puppets, musical instruments and posters.

FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES: Funding for the project was provided by UNICEF, The McKnight Foundation, and World Education, and covered all resources and activities in the schools. Teachers attending training were paid a per diem allowance to cover travel and meals. One of the key aims of the project was to enhance the capacity of MoEYS to manage projects so that the MREC project could be institutionalized into the school system. This required extensive training across the different tiers of educational management and through in-service and pre-service teacher training. MoEYS staff attended training workshops on project monitoring and evaluation, child to child teaching methodologies, and curriculum development. World Education counterparts worked with MoEYS staff in the field to implement teacher training, peer education, community activities, and to monitor and report on the project.

COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION: The project supported local school/community committees with capacity building services and material support to help the committees become involved in community-wide mine risk education activities. The school/community committees (aka PTAs) worked with teachers, school students, and other education counterparts to organize outreach events to target out-of-school children. Each committee was responsible for the planning and implementation of activities to commemorate the National Mine Awareness Day, celebrated in each commune.

CURRICULUM: In collaboration with the Pedagogical Research Institute of the MoEYS a national curriculum on landmine risk education was developed for primary school students. The curriculum was tested, reviewed and implemented in all target areas. The curriculum was accompanied by a teacher training program, with a teacher's manual and teaching guidelines. The MREC project also developed a landmine risk education program for pre-service teachers in Teacher Training Colleges in collaboration with the Teacher Training Department of the MoEYS.

Programming Interventions: Impact and Effectiveness

ACCESS: The project reached the most heavily landmine-affected districts, some of which are considered among the most remote and poorest districts of Cambodia. Due to their remoteness, many of the schools in the targeted districts received little previous support in education, so the MREC project served as an entry point for general support to local education officials. Within the schools, the project targeted all teachers and all students. As boys tend to be better represented in rural schools, particularly at the higher grades, some gender

imbalance was inherent for the in-school activities. To compensate for this factor, and to respond to the needs of the very large out-of-school population (some areas have as many as 50% school age children out of school), the project targeted out-of-school children with outreach activities with an emphasis on reaching both girls and boys, as well as the larger community.

MANAGEMENT: The project was jointly managed by World Education and MoEYS. Extensive training was provided to MoEYS staff at central, provincial, district, cluster and school level in the management, monitoring and evaluation of the project. At the end of the project the responsibility for the management of the Mine Risk Education for Children project was fully transferred to the Ministry.

QUALITY: A concern for the sustainability of the project's interventions guided all aspects of the project plan and implementation. Project stakeholders - children, community members, teachers, school and cluster officials, and education staff at the district and province level - were involved in the planning, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of the various training and outreach activities. The use of a monitoring and evaluation framework at the local level facilitated the regular review of activities and their effectiveness. Results of M&E activities guided regular revision of implementation strategies, curriculum materials, and teaching methodologies. A key objective of the project was to institutionalize mine awareness education at the community level through the formal education system. This was achieved through training and capacity building activities with a particular focus on the local staff of the MoEYS. The relationship between MoEYS and WE was formalized through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding and the establishment of a steering committee within MoEYS to review and guide the project plan. The integration of in-school activities with community outreach activities facilitated the dissemination of mine risk messages to out of school children and the community. School students played a key role in reaching the community and their out of school peers with mine awareness messages by participating in teacher led educational events and school outreach projects.

OVERALL PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS: Outputs July 2000 to December 2002: The project was successful in meeting its objectives and transferring the full responsibility for continued management to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport by December 2002. The following results were achieved:

- Mine risk education curriculum was field-tested, revised and fully adopted into the formal curriculum program for primary schools
- Over 2,700 in-service school teachers received intensive cluster-based training
- Over 1,800 in-service school teachers received refresher training and support
- Over 106,000 primary school students learned about mine risk education
- Of the over 100,000 primary school students reached by the project
- Through child-to-child outreach activities, over 30,000 primary school students reached
- 38 target clusters organized community outreach activities on mine risk prevention
- Village presentations reached 11,000 out-of-school youth and more than 10,000 adults
- Over 40 staff from other NGOs were trained in the mine risk education curriculum
- Over 240 MoEYS counterparts received support and guidance from the project teams
- Librarians and resource center managers working in 38 school clusters received training and guidance on supporting community-based outreach efforts for out-of-school youth
- School Support Committees (aka PTA) associated with 38 school clusters helped organize outreach activities, particularly the Mine Awareness Days.

EQUIP1: Building Educational Quality through Classrooms, Schools, and

Communities is a multi-faceted program designed to raise the quality of classroom teaching and the level of student learning by effecting school-level changes. EQUIP1 serves all levels of education, from early childhood development for school readiness, to primary and secondary education, adult basic education, pre-vocational training, and the provision of life-skills. Activities range from teacher support in course content and instructional practices, to principal support for teacher performance, and community involvement for improving school management and infrastructure. EQUIP1 works with food for education issues and contributes to the provision of education and training in crisis and post-crisis environments.

The American Institutes for Research (AIR) is the lead organization responsible for implementing EQUIP1 and is joined by fourteen outstanding partners: Academy for Educational Development, Aga Khan Foundation USA, CARE, Discovery Channel Global Education Fund, Education Development Center, Howard University, International Reading Association, The Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. Foundation, Juárez & Associates, Inc., Michigan State University, Save the Children, Inc., Sesame Workshop, University of Pittsburgh, and World Education, Inc..

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